![Los Angeles Pacific University | Azusa Pacific University System]

MAP Program Review Executive Summary 2020-2021

Process

The Master of Arts in Psychology (MAP) program has been offered at Los Angeles Pacific University (LAPU), formerly known as Azusa Pacific University, University College (UC), since 2014. The MAP was added to the university programs to meet the needs associated with the increasing popularity of graduate-level careers within the psychology discipline.

A Program Review Committee (PRC) composed of academic administrators, full-time faculty, and adjunct faculty began in January of 2022 to conduct a comprehensive program review. Following guidelines provided by the WASC Senior Colleges and Universities Commission (WSCUC), the program review examined program quality, viability, and sustainability.

The PRC's review of the MAP program was based on analyses of available information on student enrollment; program purpose and design; annual learning results for the program; similar programs offered by competitors; student retention, completion, and graduation rates; student survey results; faculty information and feedback; market trends; Dr. Irene Kao's needs and exit surveys; and institutional resources allocated to the program.

Once the PRC completed an initial review of the program, external reviewers were invited to conduct their own review of the program and provide additional feedback which was summarized in the External Review Report. The outcome of this process was then synthesized in a 31-page MAP Program Review 2020-2021 Report. The summary findings and recommendations are presented below.

Findings

- Overall, the MAP courses seem to be generally aligned with the MAP program, institutional outcomes, and WSCUC standards. However, a thorough, cautious review has shown that limited data exists in some important measurement standards as it relates to previous Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) assessments. Largely, these have not occurred due to issues such as insufficient sample sizes and improper artifact options, largely resulting from revisions to mastery-level assessment courses. MAP Program Learning Outcomes Report Summaries from both 2019 and 2020 indicated that a comprehensive assessment of PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 have not recently been completed.

- PLOs 1 and 2 were last formally assessed in the 2016-2017 academic year and can be viewed here. For both PLOs, the Aggregate Achievement Standard was set at a benchmark of 80 percent and both failed. Interrator reliability exercises were conducted for both assessments with 50%+ consistency on PLO 1 and 75% consistency on PLO 2 on both, suggesting correlation between the reviewers, though some increased standardization would be beneficial. The sample size for PLO 1 was 32 artifacts (41% of the 79 possible) and for PLO 2, the sample size was 16 artifacts (50%

of the 32 possible). The results for PLO 1 indicated that out of 32 randomly assigned items, 18 passed and 14 failed (for a 56% pass rate). For PLO 2, out of the 16 randomly assigned items, 7 passed and 9 failed (for a 44% pass rate).

- PLOs 3 and 4 were last comprehensively assessed in 2018 and can be viewed here. For both PLOs, the Aggregate Achievement Standard was set at a benchmark of 80 percent. Interrator reliability exercises were conducted for both assessments with 80% consistency on PLO 3 and 76% consistency on PLO 4, suggesting high and moderately high correlation between the reviewers, though some minor increased standardization would be beneficial.   For PLO 3, the sample size was 33 artifacts (40% of 83 possible). The results for PLO 3 indicated that out of 33 randomly assigned items, 26 passed and 7 failed (for a 79% pass rate). For PLO 4, the sample size was 24 artifacts (50% of 47 possible). The results for PLO 4 indicated that out of 24 randomly assigned items, 8 passed and 16 failed (for a 33% pass rate).

- MAP courses PSYC 530, PSYC 550, PSYC 590, PSYC 640, PSYC 670 (APSY 500), PSYC 680, and PSYC 690 have undergone major revisions since they were first launched. MAP courses PSYC 520, PSYC 540 (2 revisions), PSYC 560, and ORGS 610/APSY 610 have undergone moderate revisions since they were first launched. Several new courses have been developed since the initial inception of the MAP program. These courses include: PSYC 520, PSYC 540 (2015, then revised twice in 2018 and 2019), PSYC 600, PSYC 620, PSYC 630, and PSYC 650. There are two courses slated for new development: PSYC 580 and PSYC 660.

- Data from the "End of Course Student Feedback Survey," gathered from 2018-2021, offers evidence that students perceive curriculum/instruction consistent with the university's core commitment to faith integration. The average response to the two faith related statements included in the survey were 4.28 and 4.27 respectively. These averages indicate that students both see and experience the intentionality of the faith integrated focus within the MAP curriculum. The lowest faith integration score was noted as 3.22 in PSYC 510 Test/Assessment. The course receiving the highest ratings for faith-based question/statement 4.89 in PSYC 650 Family Issues. While students largely seem to perceive strong faith integration in their MAP courses, there is a disconnect with their performance on accurately integrating it into their course work, as evidenced by the failure of PLO 1.

- The MAP program formally launched in 2014 with 25 students and steadily climbed to a high of 262 students in the 2017-2018 academic year. In 2018-2019, 188 students were enrolled, and in 2019-2020, 145 students were enrolled. While enrollment is somewhat lower in recent years, retention is high suggesting that the program has stability rather than higher enrollment combined with low retention which can suggest volatility.

- The retention rate for MAP students, measured as those enrolled in the same semester one year later, has averaged approximately 64% since the inception of the program. Over the *last* academic year for which full data are available (2020) the retention rate has been nearly 85%. The *overall* retention rate is lower than the average rate at LAPU, which is 79%, though the MAP program has demonstrated increased retention in the most recent year. This may be especially important to note given the impact of the *COVID-19* pandemic and suggests the stability of the program currently. While LAPU lacks clear data on non-returning students, some contributing factors may include an absence of motivation to finish a program due to a career change, inadequate coach-student engagement, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the desire to pursue a clinical and/or licensure-based program and family or personal issues. Offering more

clarity on career paths with a MAP degree, input from recent graduates, and user-friendly engaging learning experiences, as well as increasing student engagement may improve retention of the MAP program. External reviewers also noted the need to distinguish and market the program as a first-choice faith-based online university, and to hire additional full-time faculty to support consistency and improve the connection for students and prevent burnout among a heavy reliance on adjuncts. One study, measuring more than 1500 graduate students, indicated that there were measurable retention and graduation advantages for students who felt a sense of belonging and/or connectedness (O'Meara et al., 2017). In particular, for women and minority students which comprise a significant percentage of LAPU MAP students, belongingness was especially important (O'Meara et al., 2017). "Our findings suggest that professional relationships matter most to graduate student sense of belonging, a finding not surprising given the large role faculty-student relationships play in graduate student retention and advancement" (O'Meara et al, 2017, pp. 267-268).

● The PRC discussed utilizing more diverse modalities for classroom engagement by faculty and SMEs in course revisions to include video posting in the discussion forums or increased emphasis of deliverables other than written assignments (more inclusion of presentation, voice-over PowerPoint, etc.). This could increase student engagement and retention, as well as degree completion long-term. This also meets the need of MAP students in increasing experiential learning opportunities, an important finding from the data collected in the needs and exit surveys.

Outcomes

Of the 482 students who have been enrolled in the MAP program since inception, 242 (50.2%) have graduated from the MAP program. MAP students transfer in an average of less than one unit from other institutions (.9 unit) and have taken an average of 2.1 years to complete their studies. In total, 554 students have graduated from all LAPU graduate programs (MPH, MBA, MPA, MAOL). Thus, MAP students comprise nearly 44% of all master's-level graduates at LAPU. The 2-years , 3-years, 4-years, 5-years, and 6-years graduation rates have varied since the program's inception. The highest 2-year graduation rate is 40.9% in Fall 2019. The highest 3-year graduation rate is 66.7% in both Summer 2016 and Fall 2017. The highest 4-year graduation rate was 68% in Fall 2015. The highest 5-year graduation rate was 69.7% in Summer 2016. The highest 6-year graduation rate was 68% in Fall 2015.

Student Feedback Surveys from 2020 to 2021 indicated that on average students are spending 16.33 hours per week in learning activities related to their MAP courses. This somewhat exceeds LAPU's *Credit Hour Policy* for students (14 hours). Students report spending the most time in PSYC 510 (often one of their first courses in the program) at an average of 18.58 hours per week, and the least amount of time on PSYC 590 at 13.2 hours on average per week. The MAP Program Review team believes that this may be evidence of self-inflation due to PSYC 510 often being the first class in program and extreme outliers in the student surveys (e.g. some students reported spending 30 hours a week on a single class, yet grades and faculty experiences do not reflect this level of investment).

Overall, MAP courses seem to be generally aligned with the MAP program with regard to Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Course Learning Objectives (CLOs), institutional outcomes, APA graduate-level psychology standards, and WSCUC standards. However, a careful and detailed review has shown that revision of some courses' curricula may be prudent specifically for PSYC 670 and 680, in which the order of course sequencing should be reversed for students to grasp research methodology in

a more logical manner. In addition, a more comprehensive and recent PLO assessment ought to be completed prior to full program review, and may have helped to cultivate a more robust program review.

Credit Hour Policy Comparison.

The MAP program is in the low/moderate position on cost per credit. It offers areas of emphasis similar/ comparable to GCU, Liberty and SNHU. The universities compared include three Christian and three secular seats of higher learning.

Some consideration might be given to expanding areas of emphasis to include: 1) Addiction/recovery, 2) Geropsychology, 3) Forensic, and 4) Health Psychology all of which are growing areas of both need and student interest. These are also evidenced as programs available at competitor institutions.

Market Demand.

Currently, there is a market demand for graduate level psychology competencies in a variety of employment sectors. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "employment of psychologists is projected to grow 8 percent from 2020 to 2030, about as fast as the average for all occupations" (2021, para. 5). Please see here for additional data. Further, while the MAP program is non-clinical/non-licensure-based, according to Stamm et al. (2016) with the American Psychological Association, there are vast career opportunities available for psychology professionals with a Master's degree ranging from: professional services (healthcare, legal, financial), teaching, research, management/supervision, sales, employee relations, governmental, social services, and non-profit. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, psychologists can expect to earn approximately $82,180 per year; at the master's level specifically, Zip Recruiter (2022) has analyzed data from ADP and identified individuals can expect to earn about $63,000 annually. This is of course dependent upon region, and expertise. Importantly, of the 10 cities with the highest paying salaries for psychology master's degree holders, 7 of these are located in California.

With stable market demand, positive salary outlook, and the diversification of career options in psychology, LAPU has done excellent work already in offering different specializations within the MAP program so that students have the option to focus on a track that addresses a specific area relevant to their career goals like developmental or industrial-organizational psychology. External reviewers did indicate a level of caution to be noted here, in that there is a distinction between clinical psychology and general or IO psychology. Clinical psychology projections have a clearer career path and as stated in the projections data, clinical, counseling and school psychologists is projected at a 10% employment change for 2020-2030 as opposed to 2% change for IO and general psychologists. This is important to help prepare graduates in the MAP program for how to market themselves professionally once they earn their masters degree. LAPU faculty range in specialties and experience, with strong clinical and research-based backgrounds and many years of teaching experience. These faculty are supported directly with an Assistant Dean, while the students are directly supported with success coaches. Lastly, students are supported by a wide variety of informational databases, rich library resources, technology resources, Tutor.com, and 24/7 tech support.

Recommendations, Future Goals, and Planning for Improvement

Recommendations

1. **Re-sequence PSYC 670 and PSYC 680.** Faculty who teach these courses believe that these are currently not in the right order for students, which can confuse learners in a subject matter area

that is already difficult for them. Students can benefit from taking the literature review course first and understanding how to review scholarly literature prior to taking the research and evaluation methods course when they develop a mock proposal. The courses need to be reversed.

Recommendation and Improvement Plan: It would be beneficial to resequence these courses based on faculty feedback to offer students a more linear experience of research methodology, better aligning when a literature review and proposal take place.

2. **Further align and implement PLO 1 more thoroughly into coursework.** Notably, this must include sensitivity to the needs expressed by MAP learners, in that specifically seeking a Christian higher education experience was not one of their top reasons for choosing the MAP program. The external reviewers also suggested more strongly aligning and marketing LAPU's faith-based identity as a way to set LAPU apart from other MAP choices that exist. MAP learners have indicated a strong takeaway from a Christian perspective within their course work, per the analyzed surveys. However, there seems to be a gap in translating this takeaway into their coursework per assessment of PLO 1. This suggestion is also being made based on the nature of the religious demographics of the student population (with a number of non-religious or non-Christian students as well as a great diversity of Christian faith denominations).

Recommendation and Improvement Plan: Providing more specificity in the examination of applicable Christian scriptures and including inclusive, concise, and manageable segments of scriptures built into the courses for discussion forums or other assignments, could provide beneficial modeling and more confidence and clarity on faith integration with psychological principles. Further, aligning the students' concerns as expressed in the needs and exit surveys (e.g. concerns over finances, work-life balance, etc.) with elements of LAPU's identification as a faith-based university may bolster students' experiences with and confidence in their choice of LAPU's MAP program. The advisory council also revealed that an additional possible recommendation is to coordinate with the faith, life, and learning community on how to integrate faith more for students.

3. **Further align and implement PLOs 2 and 4 more thoroughly into coursework.** The PRC and other faculty reported students often struggle with research methodology and writing scientifically, and with proper APA style, even with significant support from instructors. As these PLOs failed in the assessments, it is important to consider ways to better support students, early and often, with thorough opportunities and exposure to resources that will help them to be successful in the later classes with more demanding research methods assignment and more extensive written work.

Recommendation and Improvement Plan: Consider how early courses in the MAP program could be remodeled to better thread important foundational research methodology and graduate-level writing skills. In addition, an increased focus on scientific communication at the graduate level in all foundational classes would be imperative. There could be an assignment added into one of the first courses that students take in which they would be required to get a writing review of their work from one of the LAPU writing resources before submitting it in class.

4. **Further align and implement PLO 3 more thoroughly into coursework.** PLO 3 also needs increased support for inclusion into courses, especially professional ethics (PSYC 550). Notably, this PLO was very close to passing in the 2018 assessment (79% pass rate).

   Recommendation and Improvement Plan: Rework course instructions, syllabus, and rubric to include more clarity on what it looks like to effectively use high-quality sources with the integration of personal and professional ethics. Ensure that course instructions, syllabus, and rubric all align in terms of expectations for students; consider the value of providing a sample paper for student support in the portal. Consider breaking a major written assignment into multiple graded parts for a less overwhelming final project and feedback along the way.

5. **More thorough and recent review of all PLOs prior to a full program review.** Since the data on PLOs was relatively limited due to insufficient sample sizes and improper artifacts, little feedback on PLOs 5-6 can be provided at this time, and feedback on PLOs 1-4 may be somewhat outdated.

   Recommendation and Improvement Plan: It may be necessary to conduct an additional full program review sooner rather than later, once all of the PLOs have been carefully and thoroughly reviewed. Per administration, by 2025, all PLOs should have been thoroughly and recently assessed.

6. **Greater acknowledgment of students' perceptions and use of the MAP program as a stepping stone.** Students' needs and exit surveys report that the MAP program is commonly utilized toward further education and training in the psychological sciences (e.g. toward a terminal degree or a licensure-based program).

   Recommendation and Improvement Plan: Dr. Irene Kao will address this with the advisory council. Aligning PLOs and CLOs to reflect the reality may support students in post-MAP workforce considerations and placements as well as additional graduate educational opportunities. Opportunities for alumni engagement may be helpful with this as well.

7. **Broadening concentrations and special topics courses offered within the MAP program**. The market analysis revealed occupational trends that highlight continued popularity of the broader mental and behavioral health fields. Furthermore, certain courses and concentrations could be geared towards workforce readiness application.

   Recommendation and Improvement Plan: The competitor analysis revealed a number of population concentrations within graduate-level psychology programming such as applied behavior analysis (ABA), child and adolescent, forensics, and social psychology.

8. **Consideration of faculty support, engagement, and alignment with WSCUC standards.** As noted by both internal and external review teams, there is a very heavy reliance on adjunct instructors in the MAP program (20 to 1 ratio).

   Recommendations and Improvement Plan: Administrative attention should be focused on cultivating opportunities for adjunct faculty to receive increased support and strategies for

classroom engagement and best practices in the online classroom, as well as a model for promotion and retention (e.g. senior or affiliate adjunct faculty status).

9. **Increased collaboration of staff and faculty with each other and with students.** This would support student engagement and learning not only within the courses, but also potentially meet the expressed student need (per need and exit survey data) for increased experiential learning opportunities.   This increased integration could also promote the sense of belongingness that has been identified as critical to graduate student success (O'Meara et al., 2017). Increased communication and engagement with additional wrap-around support by faculty and support staff may benefit student retention efforts.

   Recommendations and Improvement Plan: Currently, there is limited interaction between faculty, success coaches, and students in many instances. Increased collaboration here may support students' experiences. Clear, time-sensitive, and efficient pathways for communications and wrap-around student care could be considered, perhaps utilizing shared drive documentation opportunities. Additionally, external reviewers noted how students could be further supported in an exploration into unique experiential learning opportunities for MAP by updating the curriculum according to said student needs, offering partnerships/collaborations with potential employers to support students in post-MAP next steps, and by developing a resource library for students with post-graduate programs and duties, responsibilities, and job descriptions taken from actual places of employment (integrating theory and practical application).

10. **Development of a diversity plan.** Identify key strategies to advance diversity among students and faculty.

    Recommendation and Improvement Plan: Develop a robust diversity plan with measurable and operational progress points and outcomes. This plan should emphasize a reflection on incorporating a faculty demographic that would best reflect the student demographic.

11. **Additional External Reviewer Notations**: Attempt to capture data from non-returning students for their decision not to continue the program via follow-up surveys, exit interviews, or other suitable methods; align PLOs with specific workforce positions and needs that may benefit from MAP program graduates; specific attention to the integration of faith-based understanding in courses with objective standards (e.g. research methods; tests and assessments); course introductions that clarify how PLO 1 is integrated in course options; and clarity and marketing needed to promote MAP as a first choice faith-based online graduate-level psychology program

    Recommendation and Improvement Plan: Explore incorporating a more robust plan of action to collect data on non-returning students. Consider revising PLOs to include more direct workforce readiness action words. Carefully integrate and revise faith-based components to courses in the research methodology sequencing. Include in early weeks of courses how PLO 1 will be integrated and experienced by students in the courses. Work with marketing specialists to develop a strategic plan and language on LAPU's MAP program as a first-choice faith-based online graduate-level psychology program.

Based on the information gathered and presented within in the MAP's review in the recommendations and improvement plans, future goals for the program are:

1. Increase and continue to develop robust survey methodologies to collect post-MAP alumni data to support current students and gather important information on post-MAP activities.

2. Consider incorporating more concentrations into the MAP program, including a clinical option as many students do intend to seek this out post-MAP at other institutions.

3. Add more workforce-ready specific topic courses (e.g. interpersonal dynamics, diversity in the workforce) to enhance the visibility of transferable skills from the classroom to employment settings. In addition, research on how best to cultivate/enhance courses that have clear transferability to other graduate-level psychology programs (e.g. PhD, PsyD, clinical counseling/clinical psychology/clinical social work) would benefit the stepping stone nature of the MAP program.

4. Measure the efficacy of diversity planning for both the curriculum and the faculty hiring procedures.

5. Consider the value of hiring an additional full-time faculty member for MAP as to best support students, existing faculty, staff, and administrators and contribute to the longevity of existing faculty resources.

Self-Study and External Reviewer Reports: Response to Recommendations

Self-Study Recommendations	Response to Recommendation
Re-sequence PSYC 670 and PSYC 680.	Target completion date:
Further align and implement PLO 1 more thoroughly into coursework.	Target completion date:
Further align and implement PLOs 2 and 4 more thoroughly into coursework.	Target completion date:
Further align and implement PLO 3 more thoroughly into coursework.	Target completion date:
More thorough and recent review of all PLOs prior to a full program review.	Target completion date:
Greater acknowledgment of students' perceptions and use of the MAP program as a stepping stone.	Target completion date:
Broadening concentrations and special topics courses offered within the MAP program.	Target completion date:
Consideration of faculty support, engagement, and alignment with WSCUC standards.	Target completion date:
Increased collaboration of staff and faculty with each other and with students.	Target completion date:
Development of a diversity plan.	Target completion date:
External Reviewer Report Recommendations	**Response to Recommendation**
Attempt to capture data from non-returning students for their decision not to continue the program via follow-up surveys, exit interviews, or other suitable methods.	Target completion date:
Align PLOs with specific workforce positions and needs that may benefit from MAP program graduates.	Target completion date:
Provide specific attention and revision to the integration of faith-based understanding in courses with objective standards (e.g. research methodology sequencing, tests & measures).	Target completion date:

Include course introductions that clarify how PLO 1 is integrated in courses.	
Work with marketing specialists to develop a strategic plan and language on LAPU's MAP program as a first-choice faith-based online graduate-level psychology program.	

Goals

Consider the value of hiring an additional full-time faculty member for MAP as to best support students, existing faculty, staff, and administrators and contribute to the longevity of existing faculty resources.

Goal Recommendations	Response to Recommendation
Increase and continue to develop robust survey methodologies to college post-MAP alumni data to support both current students and gather important information on post-MAP activities.	Target completion date:
Consider incorporating more concentrations into the MAP program, including a clinical option as many students do intend to seek this out post-MAP at other institutions.	Target completion date:
Adding more workforce-ready specific topic courses (e.g. interpersonal dynamics, diversity in the workforce) to enhance the visibility of transferable skills from the classroom to employment settings. In addition, research on how to best cultivate/enhance courses that have clear transferability to other graduate-level psychology programs (e.g. PhD, PsyD, clinical counseling/clinical psychology/clinical social work) would benefit the stepping stone nature of the MAP program.	Target completion date:
Measure the efficacy of diversity planning for both the curriculum and the faculty hiring procedures.	Target completion date:
Consider the value of hiring an additional full-time faculty member for MAP to best support students, existing faculty, staff, and administrators and contribute to the longevity of existing faculty resources.	Target completion date: